4.5 Stakeholder Needs & Issues – Consortium-Wide

The next two sections contain pie charts depicting the results from the following two questions in the County Stakeholder Questionnaire:
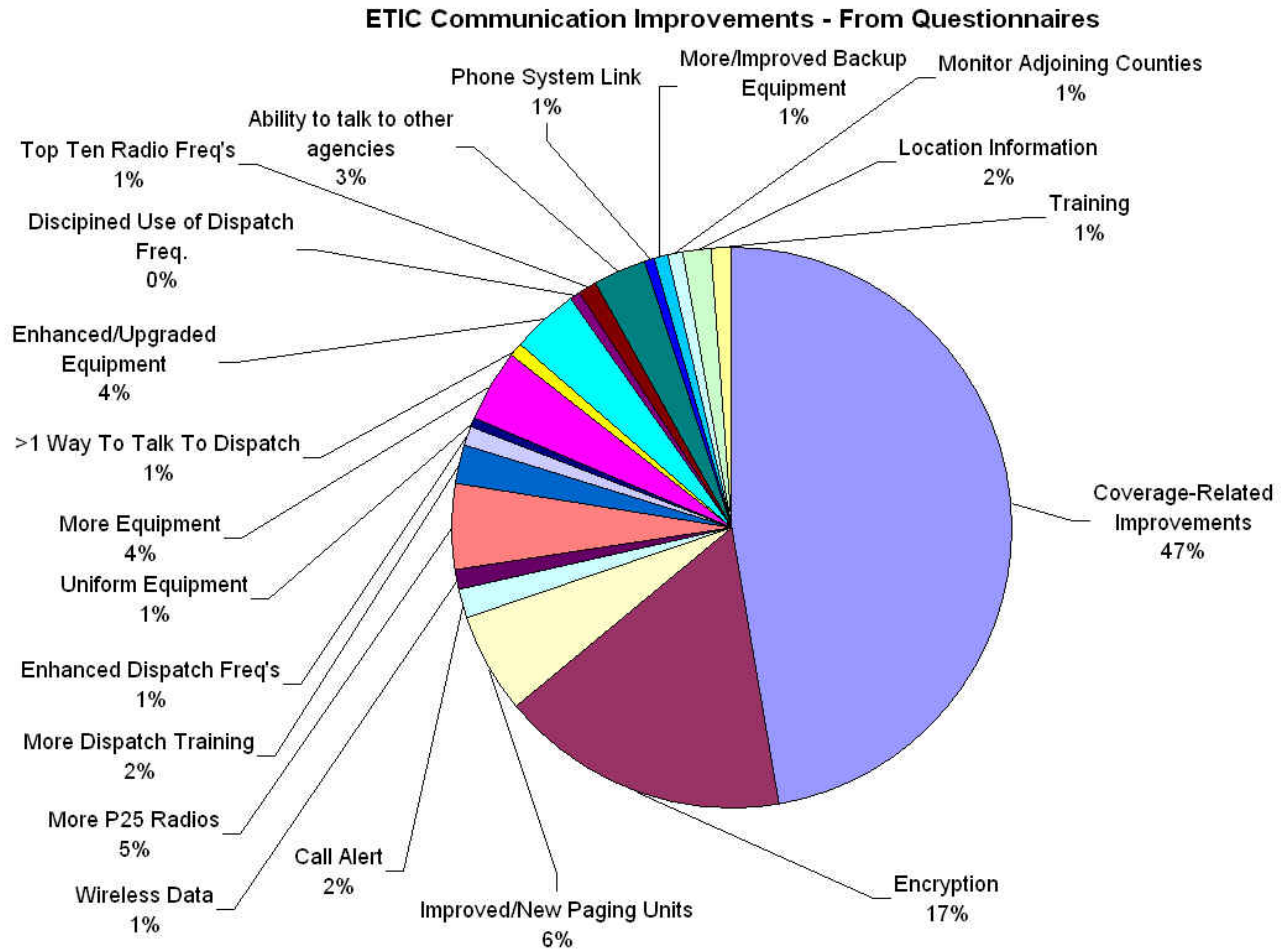
- **List, in priority order, up to five (5) communications improvements needed from initial dispatch to call completion.**

- **List, in priority order, up to five (5) factors that will be critical to future radio system in your county, city, or area of jurisdiction.**

The results from each county were tabulated, with items given scores as follows:

An item listed as #1 received five points.
An item listed as #2 received four points.
An item listed as #3 received three points.
An item listed as #2 received two points.
An item listed as #5 received one point.

This point system allowed for weight to be given to those items higher in priority.

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4.5.4 List, in priority order, up to five (5) communications improvements needed from initial dispatch to call completion.


Figure 62 – Communications Improvements, Ten County ETIC Total

Analysis

1. Coverage is everyone's biggest problem.
2. Even though several people do not think encryption is important, a much large number do.
3. Equipment is still a big issue for many, even without taking P25 into consideration. Several agencies either have no radios at all, or are functioning with radios incapable of transmitting and/or receiving on the standard State of Montana Mutual Aid frequencies.

4.5.5 List, in priority order, up to five (5) factors that will be critical to future radio system in your county, city, or area of jurisdiction.
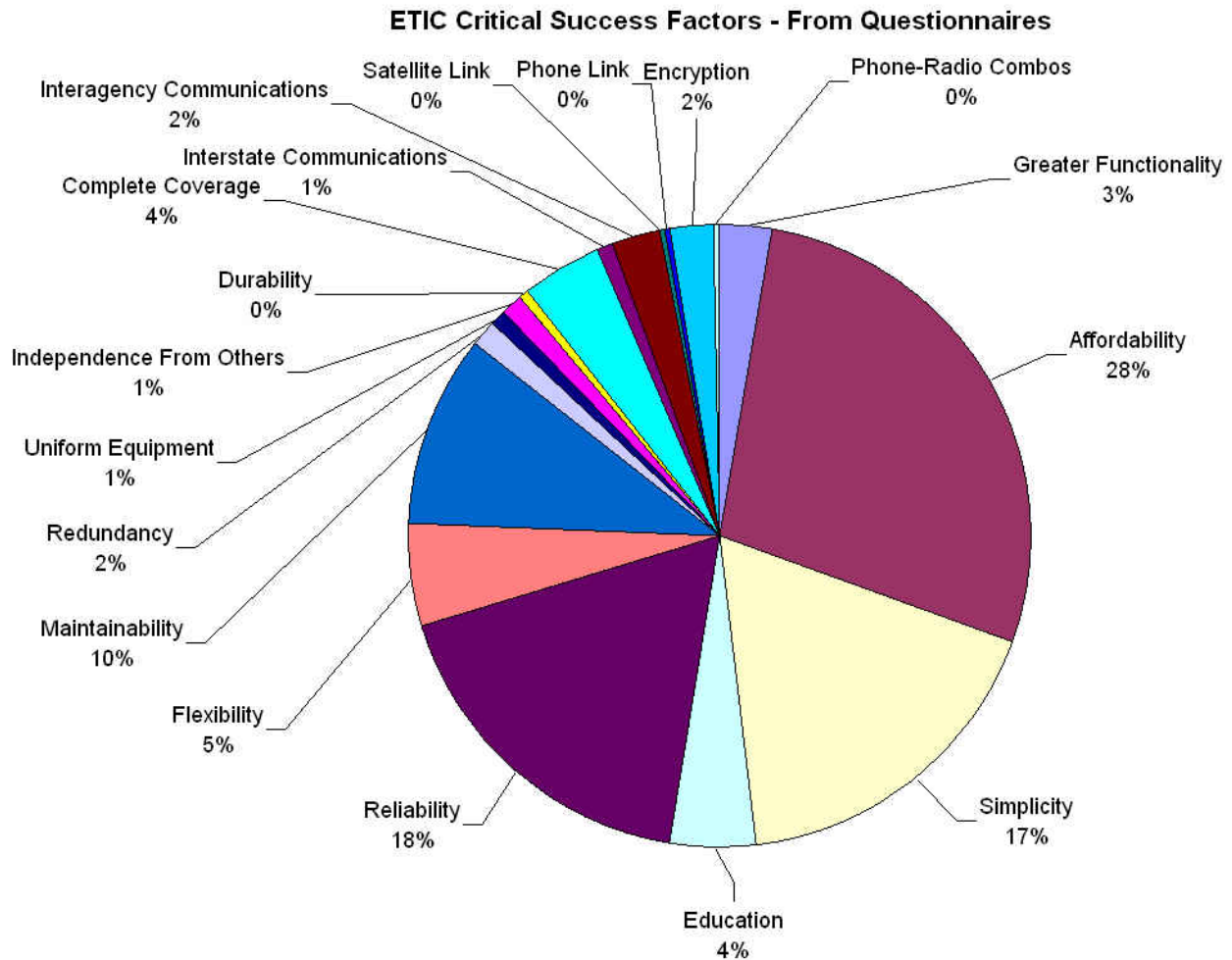
Figure 63 – Success Factors, Ten County ETIC Total

Analysis

1. Money, money, money. Most, if not all of the counties in the ETIC do not have a lot of money to spend on new equipment.
2. Things need to be simple. Too much complexity and people will either not use it, or will forget how to use it.
3. The equipment needs to be reliable and easy to maintain.
4. There is some overlap in items on this list and on the Communications Improvements list. To the Project Manager, this indicates once again how important those particular Communication Improvements are. Coverage and encryption are the two most obvious ones.

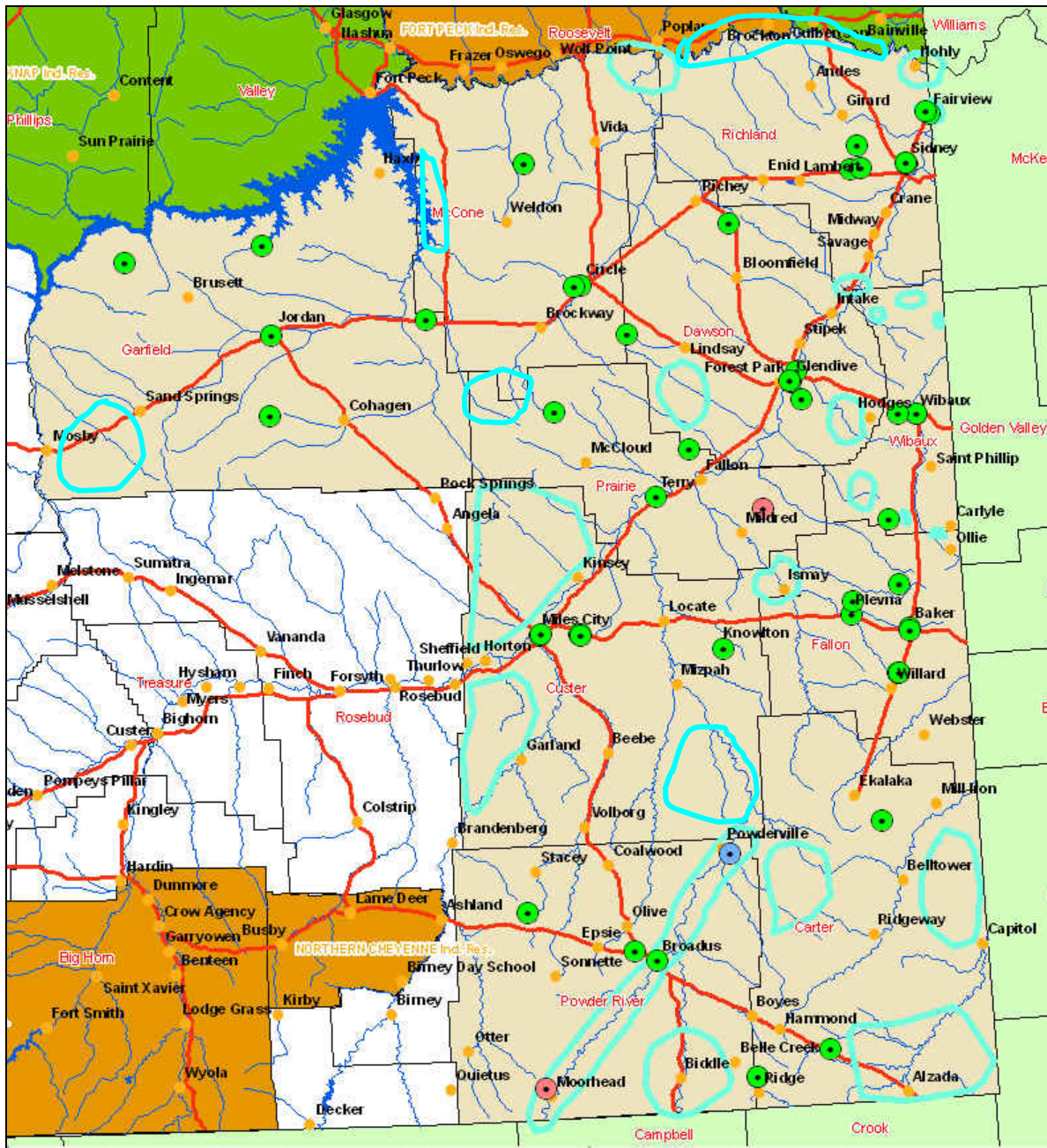## 4.5.6 Major "Dead" Spots – Coverage Problems Within The Consortium

Figure 64 – "Dead" Spots, Consortium-Wide

These spots are very roughly drawn. They are primarily to indicate that there are some coverage issues within a general area and are <u>not</u> to be taken as indicating no coverage throughout an area.

4.5.7 Other Needs & Issues

This section contains those needs and issues which are widespread throughout the consortium but not included in the sections above. They are not presented here in any specific order.

1. Creating and enforcing a dispatch SOP

   Almost without exception, the undisciplined use of the dispatch channels was identified as a real problem in every county. This causes both dispatch and agencies problems as people try to use dispatch for dispatch, but find themselves fighting with non-dispatch traffic. It was recommended that the dispatch people be given more authority by the agencies to ask abusers to please move to another channel. This authority would have to be granted by all who use the dispatch channels in order for the dispatchers to feel comfortable doing this. Otherwise, they fear reprisals.

2. Inclusion of non-county stakeholders in all counties

   During the course of the project, various non-county stakeholders were invited to meetings. These persons expressed thanks for being included and asked that they not be forgotten during the subsequent phases of the project. These agencies and entities can be found in Section 4.1.14, *Non-County Stakeholders*.

3. Cell phone coverage

   Cell phone coverage is very limited in some parts of the consortium and sometimes non-existent. Although there is little the consortium can do to force a company to put in a cell tower, many of the stakeholders in the consortium have found that external antennas and boosters have greatly increased the coverage of their cell phones.

4. Backup for dispatch and or EOC

   Many of the agencies in the consortium have limited or no backup capabilities for their dispatch and/or EOC.

5. Backup radio shop help if primary radio shop not available

   Most of the counties in the consortium rely on only one radio shop to take care of their equipment needs. It makes sense to establish a backup radio shop who can step in if needed.

6. Hospital-to-ambulance communication

   In almost every county, one of the issues identified was poor communication capabilities between ambulances and hospitals. This included hospitals within the county and hospitals

outside of the county. An improvement is needed here and the Interoperability Project may be able to help.

Readers interested in EMS/ambulance communication issues are encouraged to read the letter from Fallon Medical Complex in Baker, found in Section 4.1.7.2, *Questionnaire Results* of Fallon County.

7. E911 upgrade

Several counties are trying to upgrade to E911. This effort may be best organized through cross-county cooperation, possibly even the consortium, since it is an expensive endeavor. Dawson and McCone counties are already working together on this effort.

8. Pager and handheld coverage within buildings and in basements

Every stakeholder identified coverage within buildings and basements as a problem. It is unknown at this time if this problem can be remedied through new equipment at the consortium level.

9. Backup power for towers

As with dispatches, backup power needs to be installed at all transmission locations identified as Critical or Extremely Critical.

10. Education

During the process of gathering information from the counties, it became obvious that a large number of those who were required to use radios really didn't know how to use them effectively. Sometimes this is simply a result of the fact that they do not use them very often, as in the case of a volunteer. Here is the opinion of one of the ETIC stakeholders:

"I think the #1 item needed currently across the consortium is EDUCATION of radio usage. You have heard as well as I that the majority of radio users have no idea what frequencies they have, or how to use them. I do not know how to accomplish this, but if the current radio users had a better understanding of what they were holding in their hands, communications effectiveness would be greatly enhanced."

4.6 Stakeholder Suggestions & Recommendations

This section contains suggestions and/or recommendations made by stakeholders within the consortium.

1. <u>A consortium-wide mobile command station</u>

    A suggestion was brought up in several counties that the consortium might consider purchasing a mobile command station for use throughout the ten-county area.

2. <u>Sharing of the new Powderville tower site</u>

    The new Powderville site in Powder River County can be shared with neighboring counties if there is interest.

3. <u>Top Ten List</u>

    Richland County has instituted a "Top Ten" channel list. Every emergency responder radio in the county has the first ten channels set to the same frequencies. This helps a great deal when interacting between the agencies, since people often think in terms of channels rather than frequencies. It was suggested that the consortium consider doing the same throughout the ten-county area.

4. <u>Cell Phone boosters</u>

    Cell phone coverage is so limited in so much of the ten-county area that the suggestion was made to encourage the use of boosters and external antennas to improve that coverage. Several people have done this and have improved their coverage considerably.

5. <u>Keep it simple</u>

    The consortium was encourage to keep any solution they pursue simple.

6. <u>PSAP Agreements With At Least One Other County</u>

    All counties were encouraged to make an agreement with at least one other county for backup PSAP service should anything happen to their own.

7. <u>Laminated Emergency Response List</u>

    In at least one county, the decision was made to have the county DES coordinator create and maintain a laminated 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper with the contact information for each emergency responder in the county so that all would have quick and easy access to it.

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